

Cultural Competence News

San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services

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Cultural Competence Newsletter

Editor: Silvia Ortiz, PhD

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Cultural Competence Newsletter. This issue focuses on gang culture and is brought to you by the Cultural Competence Committee. All Newsletters are intended to increase awareness of the diverse cultures which reside in our community. It is our hope that by learning about the representative cultures we are able to exist with a deeper respect for those among us and provides services which embrace differences. Each Newsletter is done in collaboration with consultants from the culture being featured.



This image of the smiling mask paired with the crying mask underline the motto "play now, pay later."

Appreciation

I extend my deep appreciation to all who contributed to this newsletter.

Cultural Competence Mission

The mission of the Cultural Competence Committee is to ensure that cultural diversity is incorporated into all levels of San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services. Given that since the year 2000, ethnic minorities exceed 50% of the population in California, and that the state demographics include diverse racial, ethnic and cultural communities, the Cultural Competence Committee is dedicated to eliminating cultural, linguistic, racial and ethnic disparities in the populations served by San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services. The term culture includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, primary language, spiritual life, age, and physical condition. Since 1996 the Cultural Competence Mission was shaped by the work of La Frontera Consulting Group. In February 2010, the California Department of Mental Health (DMH) issued the Cultural Competence Plan Requirements (CCPR) which set state wide standards for achieving cultural and linguistic competence for County Behavioral Health Systems. The CCPR sets criteria that will move County Behavioral Health Services "toward the reduction of mental health service disparities identified in racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and other underserved/underserved populations". The revised mission works towards the development of the most culturally and linguistically competent programs and services that meet the needs of the County of San Luis Obispo's diverse racial, ethnic and cultural communities.

Cultural Competence Committee

The Cultural Competence Committee was formed in 1996 and has been entrusted with overseeing that San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services adheres to the Cultural Competence Plan. The members of the committee consist of representatives from diverse cultural backgrounds who bring the richness of this diversity to the committee.

The members are affiliated with San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Services, California Polytechnic State University, Family Care Network and consumer groups.

Committee Membership

Silvia Ortiz, Ph.D.

Chairperson

Cultural Competence Committee

Director

Servicios Sicologicos Para Latinos:
A Latino Outreach Program

Karen Baylor, Ph.D., LMFT

County Behavioral Health
Department Administrator

Wendy Clodfelter, MHSA

Margie Craig, LMFT

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Janet Lorenzo

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Nancy Mancha-Whitcomb, LMFT

Program Supervisor
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Lisa Sweatt, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Psychology and Child Development
Cal Poly State University, SLO

Judy Vick, LMFT

Patients' Rights Advocate

Gang Tattoos and their *Meanings*

Historically, tattoos were developed as a way to identify prisoners and ostracize them from law-abiding society. Tattoos were imprinted on inmates to identify them as felons and to identify the crimes they committed. Over time tattoos have evolved many meanings. Gangs use them as a language to communicate their “body of truth” documenting gang life. This entails everything from tallying crimes committed to memorializing the loss of a loved one, to representing a hood, to serving as the hallmark of a life-sentence in prison. While serving to unify members within a gang tattoos act as a self-imposed segregation: segregating one gang from the other. While certain symbols are universally recognized as gang tattoos, most tattoos vary drastically from gang to gang. Tattoos amongst members of the same gang will often differ significantly, carrying familiar elements but in a personalized way, thus highlighting both a group mentality and an individual identity. Essentially gang Tattoos symbolize a commitment that stays with the body even after death.

Gang Tattoos

Tear drops

This is one of the most commonly recognizable gang tattoos. While it can be symbolic of a murder committed, more often than not it is meant to memorialize a loved one lost.



Skulls

A skull tattoo, such as this one, is not uncommon. It is an omnipresent reminder that death is part of gang living. Gang tattoos are a study in contradictions; they reflect a culture where life is fleeting but tattoos make the record of life, and often life-record, immortal.



Organized crime

The Yakuza are known to be responsible for the largest organized crime phenomena in the world. The modern day distinctive Japanese tattoos continue to gain the attention of mainstream society.



Hometown pride

Because much of gang culture revolves around loyalty to home, area code and city name tattoos are common. Here is one man's Chicago tribute.



Gangs

Silvia Ortiz, PhD

According to the Department of Justice's 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment, there are at least 21,500 gangs and more than 731,000 active gang members. While gangs are less prevalent in rural areas, in major cities, gang violence is responsible- for roughly half of all --homicides. The National Center for Juvenile Justice used a combination of police department reports and self-reporting to compile the -Juvenile Offenders Data Base. They estimated that 49 percent of gang members were Latino, 37 percent were black, 8 percent white, 5 percent Asian and 1 percent had another ethnicity. They also found that gang membership is not as prevalent among youth as some fear -- between 1 and 2 percent of children ages 10 to 17 were gang members, although the percentage spikes when only "at-risk" youth are counted. Those that did join gangs didn't stay long, with the majority remaining in the gang for less than a year. There are many possible reasons for someone to join a gang, but four primary reasons seem to describe most ethnic gang members:

1. **Poverty**

Most ethnic gang members come from severely impoverished homes. At a young age these children need to find their own food, periodic shelter, and clothing. Many of the parents are either in prison, involved with drugs, or living the street life and neglect the children. Poverty in part accounts for the reason that gangs exist in the poorest, rundown areas of cities. However, not everyone who is poor joins a gang.

2. **Family**

Most ethnic gang members come from highly dysfunctional homes with parents who are: generational gang members, drug addicts/alcoholics, part of the criminal system, violent, and incapable of emotional attachment. Other dynamics of these homes may include sever neglect, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, and "ritualistic abuse." Again, not everyone who comes from these familial dynamics joins a gang.

3. **Peer pressure**

Potential gang members tend to be young. Young people are susceptible to peer pressure. When a youth lives in a gang-dominated area, or attends a school with a strong gang presence, they might find that many of their friends are joining gangs. It might be difficult for a youth to understand the harm that joining a gang can bring if he's worried about losing all of his friends.

4. **Despair**

The process of giving up on life can form a type of despair that welcomes death. Living on the edge can numb that despair. Living and dying for the gang can offer a purpose that quenches the despair.

Gang membership is a process of selecting and being selected. Only those whose essence is the commitment to living the gang life style, no matter what it requires, and dying for the gang become “Hard Core” gang member. The process of moving into the Core of the gang has been conceptualized as five stages or levels.

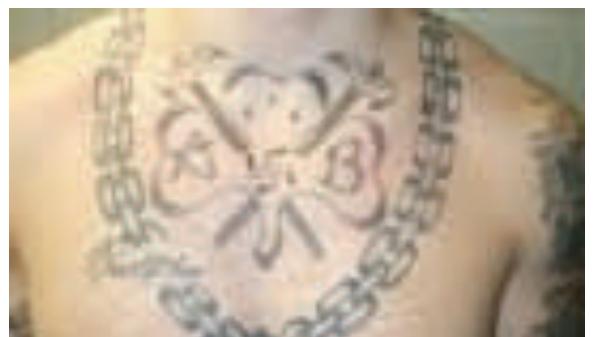
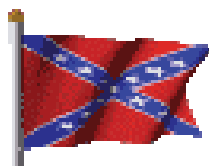
1. **Level I**-Make Believers is depicted as the initial involvement with the gang culture. In this level a youth may know individual gang members and respect them. He may admire the life style from a distance but he does not associate with the gang. He may start to imitate gang members. Youths in this level tend to be between the ages of 5-10 and they represent approximately 10% of gang membership.
2. **Level II**: Claimers build on the Make Believe depiction. These youths live in or near gang areas or have family members involved in gangs. The youths usually start to show a high rate of absences, truancy, and anti-social behavior in school. They demonstrate aggressive behaviors and have a dismal view of the past, present and future. Many have chronic anger and an inability to control it. The age range of this level tends to overlap with the Make Believe Level and places the youths at about ages 9-13. This level represents about 20% of the actual gang membership.
3. **Level III**: Associates or Wanna-be's associate regularly with gang members. These youths are mentally prepared to join a gang and are willing to do anything for gang approval and acceptance. They “put in the work”. They dress in gang clothing, get tattoos and detach from their family of origin. At this point, the gang becomes the family. This level may represent 40% of the actual gang membership
4. **Level IV**: Gang Member associate exclusively with gang members, usually go through a gang initiation, generally has a gang nickname and demonstrate total commitment to the gang lifestyle. May carry a weapon or have easy access to a weapon and participate in gang related activities. This level may represent 20% of the actual gang membership.
5. **Level V** - Hard Core Gang Member associates only with gang members and the gang lifestyle. They initiate, direct and instruct the commission of street related gang activities. They live and die for the cause of the gang. This level represents 5 to 10% of the actual gang membership.

To date less emphasis has been placed on researching and tracking the activities of the white identified gangs. However, with the recent visible resurgence and growth of white supremacist groups, more information has become available. The uniting mission of the White Supremacist group in the United States is to eradicate all non-white racial groups and have whites/Aryans control the nation. The basic underpinnings of these organizations are rooted in religion, which is combined with a paramilitary, survivalists, or anarchist's operational approach. Their members have strong feelings of white race.

Their philosophies tend to be neo-Nazi and racist with a strong undercurrent of hatred and anger towards all non-white racial groups living in the U.S. Currently, Klan groups are on the decline while more Hitler-inspired groups, like the National Alliance and the Church of the Creator (Aryan Nations), are growing in numbers and influence.

Swastikas and Uzis are replacing hoods and crosses. White Supremacist tends to cross all social economic groups and educational levels. Many have family roots in one form of the movement and have been exposed to white supremacist who they admire. Information on membership can be obtained on the internet but there are many secure sites which require passwords to access. White Supremacists are organized into approximately 300 different organizations. About 50,000 Americans are hardcore ideological activists for the white supremacist movement. Since 9/11, California has seen an exponential growth in the number of people who openly affiliate with a White Supremacy group. They tend to organize into approximately 300 different groups or gangs. The gangs who have the most visibility are:

1. American Nazi Party
2. Aryan Nations
3. The Holy Order or The Order (Bruders Schweigen)
4. The Silent Brotherhood
5. White Aryan Resistance
6. Church of the Creator
7. Ku Klux Klan (many factions)
8. National Socialist White Peoples' Party
9. National Socialist White Workers' Party (NSWWP)
10. United White Peoples' Party
11. The New Order
12. National Democratic Front
13. Skinheads
14. Aryan Youth Movement



What can parents do to keep their kids away from gangs:

Pedro Inzuna Arroyo

Deputy Probation Officer

- ◆ Supervise your children's activities and know their friends.
- ◆ Become acquainted with the parents of your child's friends.
- ◆ Get your children involved in supervised and positive group activities.
- ◆ Develop good communication with your children.
- ◆ Spend positive time with your children.
- ◆ Clearly and continually begin to express to your children at an early age your disapproval of gangs and gang-related activities.
- ◆ Learn about gang and drug activity in your community.
- ◆ Do not allow your child to wear gang-related clothing or modify with gang markings.
- ◆ Read the lyrics of the music that your child listens to and discuss them.
- ◆ Monitor your child's television watching. Select programs to watch together. Monitor internet traffic.
- ◆ Provide your child with information about how to deal with conflict and racism.
- ◆ Take advantage of the activities in your area that are available for children. Local recreation centers, libraries, bookstores, churches and free activities.
- ◆ Take a parenting class. Many schools offer free classes that are fun and informative.

Voices of Former Gang Members

"all tha people I grew up with includin me were or are bangers- my whole family. I'll tell you now we've either died in it or always wished ta get out of it. I never met anybody who was really out of it. they may have got out tha gang but not tha drugs or violence or jail or poverty. once you're in you're never out. this isn't a cool life, it's a piece of shit one an I hate it. Smiley no More"

"No one owns you and you dont own no- your thoughts. We joined because we each other for that love and protection, and the ones we love by tryn to control color. God Bless the Gang members who right now protect them and their family are loved by You Lord and by me Amen"



"Respect and pride was what i wanted, then that was all i wanted, back then that without a care in thr world, not knowing girl, I fought other gangs for territory, not realizing i was only fighting my brother, I finally realized i wasnt meant to be in the royal family(LK), I just want other kids to know they are not meant to be there either and if ur already in Plz try to get out, if u think on getting in...plz dont....u think its gona be fun? SAM"

body. No one has the right to control had no one at home and we looked to but, how are we protecting our selves whos time is up over a street name or don't or cant seem to follow in your steps and may they someday relize that they Anonomous

fear and violence was how i got it, Back was all i needed, I followed this lifestyle if I would live the next day to see my

if I would live the next day to see my

Five Cities Resources

The Bakari Project® Mentoring Program at Cal Poly

The Bakari Project® Mentoring Program at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) is a culturally sensitive and gender specific intervention and prevention program for moderate to high risk juvenile offenders ranging in age from 14-17 years.

It is a 12-month evidence based program that serves adolescent males, with the main objective of *reducing the number of new crimes and new victims* in San Luis Obispo County by addressing criminogenic factors associated with recidivism. It includes one-to-one mentoring which is provided by a Cal Poly undergraduate or graduate student.

The program consists of 52 three-hour weekly sessions held on Cal Poly campus, weekly job readiness and employment development sessions, weekly community volunteer service opportunities, drug and alcohol counseling, tutoring, and off-campus mentor-mentee activities that facilitate pro-social behavior. Weekly parenting groups (an English speaking group and a Spanish speaking group) are also facilitated at Cal Poly.

Youth referred to the program are introduced to six areas of mastery: self-knowledge and self-awareness, history, relationships, skill development (i.e., anger management/conflict resolution, communication skills, career development, economic empowerment, health and wellness, and substance use/abuse), leadership, and community service.

The structure and design of the Bakari Project® allows for multiple collaborations and partnerships throughout San Luis Obispo County. Thus, the program is primarily supported by the San Luis Obispo County Probation Department and the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department. Additionally, the Bakari Project® is currently receiving partial sponsorship from SLO County Community Foundation as *A Pathways to Adulthood Initiative*. The program also serves as a rehabilitation and re-entry program for the Anti-Gang Coordinating Commission.

For more information regarding the The Bakari Project® Mentoring Program at Cal Poly, please contact the Program Director, Dr. Roslyn M. Caldwell at rmcaldwe@calpoly.edu.

Liberty Tattoo Removal Program

The Liberty Tattoo Removal Program removes anti-social, gang related and visible tattoos so that people can:

1. Obtain employment
2. Move forward in their lives
3. Become accepted in our community
4. Improve opportunities for education

For more information contact the SLO CAP Liberty Tattoo Removal Program
Janet Allenspach
Phone (805) 544-2484
jallenspach@capslo.org



QuestBound Leadership

Youth Development Program

Our mission is to empower youth so they can live healthy lifestyles, achieve their goals, receive positive mentoring, develop a sense of purpose in the community and become tomorrow's leaders. Questbound Leadership operated two youth centers located in Paso Robles and Nipomo. The actualization centers provides free after-school empowerment services that link youth ages 12-18 to community service, mentoring, tutoring, workforce preparedness, mental-behavioral health counseling, sports & recreation, enrichment field trips, outdoor education, music & the arts, and a teen computer lab.

Locations:

Nipomo Site:

151 W. Dana Street, Suite #204

Nipomo Ca, 93444.

[\(805\) 929-6054](tel:(805)929-6054)

Paso Robles Site:

504 28th Street, Paso Robles Ca, 93446.

[\(805\) 227-0544](tel:(805)227-0544)Project Supervisor, James Statler: jstatler@capslo.org.**San Luis Obispo County Anti-Gang Commission**

The Anti-Gang Coordinating Commission (AGCC) was created in 2008 by District Attorney Gerald Shea, Sheriff Pat Hedges, and Probation Chief Kim Barrett. They brought together more than 60 representatives from public and private agencies and created a "Strategic Plan." The Plan includes three specific areas of focus: Prevention, Detection and Suppression, and Rehabilitation and Reentry. The mission of the AGCC is to "decrease the magnitude, frequency, and violence of gangs in San Luis Obispo County." The AGCC works with the Gang Task Force which is overseen by the SLO County Sheriff's Department.

In 2009, the AGCC hired a Coordinator, Marci Powers, to implement the goals and objectives of the Plan. Marci is a retired probation officer from Ventura County. Over the past 16 months Marci has worked to build the partnerships which are necessary to make significant progress. She believes that gangs present threats to the safety of our communities, and that police departments and schools cannot be, and should not be, expected to solve this problem alone. The community itself needs to be involved in creating and sustaining solutions.

If you would like to know more about the AGCC, or have Marci make a presentation, she can be reached at: 781-4893 or:

mpowers@co.slo.ca.us.**San Luis Obispo County Gang Task Force**

The SLO County Gang Task Force is also available to conduct trainings to community based organizations and other entities regarding gangs and prevention strategies in San Luis Obispo County. These workshops are available free of cost and can be scheduled by contacting

Deputy Probation Officer Tony Verdugo at (805) 781-4040

or via email at tverdugo@co.slo.ca.us

San Luis Obispo County Gang Task Force

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Deputy Probation Officer Tony Verdugo at [\(805\) 781-4040](tel:(805)781-4040)
or via email at tverdugo@co.slo.ca.us

Youth In Action

The San Luis Obispo County Probation Department's Youth In Action Program (YIA) aims to empower at-risk, low-income, and underserved youth to realize their own potential and build the strength and resilience to resist gang involvement and delinquent behavior. YIA is a partnership between SCYC, the LMUSD, and the San Luis Obispo County Probation Department. YIA is the only program in the entire county that specifically addresses gang-prevention and early intervention issues and strategies for at-risk youth and their families.

The voluntary program focuses on students ages 10-15 who demonstrate to be at-risk for delinquency and gang involvement due to student's school behavior, family criminal history, and other factors. It provides at-risk youth, from 6 elementary and middle schools, with an intense year-long, school-based, and evidence-based intervention and educational curriculum. The weekly sessions teach youth viable alternatives to the gang lifestyle and delinquency, as well as learn cognitive behavioral strategies to reduce violence through effective communication, conflict resolution, decision making, refusal and critical thinking skills.

YIA also offers educational workshops for parents and community-based organizations countywide to effectively identify and reduce gang involvement in youth.

Deputy Probation Officer,
Pedro Inzunza Arroyo at (805)474-7493
Jorge Montezuma at (805)474-7491

parroyo@co.slo.ca.us or
jmontezuma@co.slo.ca.us



Other Resources:

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry in the U.S. and abroad through information, education, legislation, and advocacy. ADL serves as a resource for government, media, law enforcement, educators and the public.

California Gang Investigator's Association

Provides a forum for all law enforcement officers (including corrections, prosecutors, parole and probation) to exchange ideas.

Gang Prevention Incorporated

Street gang identification awareness and activity training for Law Enforcement, Military, Prosecution, Corrections, and Probation and Parole. Training is offered to educational institutions and selectively provided to the private sector as well. A 400-page street gang identification manual is available to Law Enforcement only. A 3-day gang specialist course is offered at various times throughout the year.

IAACI Web

The International Association of Asian Crime Investigators, in association with the International Asian Organized Crime Conferences, provide focus on the criminal justice system's response to organized crime in Asia.

Know Gangs

Since 1997, Know Gangs has been a leading training provider for law enforcement, educators and social service workers seeking to enhance their knowledge about gangs, drugs and school violence.

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association

The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA) was formed in 1998. It is a co-operative organization currently composed of representatives from 16 regional gang investigators associations representing over 20,000 gang investigators across the country, as well as federal agencies and other organizations involved in gang-related matters.

National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC)

The National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) is a multi-agency effort that integrates the gang intelligence assets of federal, state, and local law enforcement entities to serve as a centralized intelligence resource for gang information and analytical support.

National Gang Crime Research Center

Provides research on gangs and gang members, disseminate information through publications and reports, and provide training and consulting services.

National Major Gang Task Force

A consortium of criminal justice professionals from Federal, state and local government agencies who specialize in gang interdiction and suppression.

National Youth Gang Center

A comprehensive, coordinated response to America's gang problem by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Southern Poverty Law Center

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

THE CULTURAL COMPETENCE PLAN

The Cultural Competence Plan (CCP) was completed in July 2010. The plan is available for viewing at:

[http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/MHS/pdfs/SLO Co CCP 2010.pdf](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/MHS/pdfs/SLO%20Co%20CCP%202010.pdf)

The following excerpt from the CCP highlights the goals of the Cultural Competence Committee :

- To ensure that County Mental Health embraces and implements the behaviors, attitudes, values and policies of cultural diversity.
- To provide recommendations that will increase service delivery to culturally diverse clients.
- To provide recommendations that address the need of continued training on cultural diversity topics.
- To identify and facilitate the removal of barriers that affect sensitive and competent delivery of service to culturally diverse clients.
- To provide recommendations that address the recruitment and retention of bilingual providers.
- To provide recommendations that increase utilization patterns of the unserved and underserved populations such as the Latinos, Native Americans, transition age youth and older adults.
- To provide County Mental Health employees with the topics and information discussed at the Cultural Competence Committee.
- To forge alliances with other community agencies and committees who support the mission and goals of the Cultural Competence Committee.
- To foster a strong network among community agencies that will facilitate an integrated delivery of services.